

NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION

CAPITALSPACE INFORMATION SESSION

10:09 a.m.
Friday, October 14, 2005

401 9th Street, N.W.
Suite 500
Washington, D.C.

PRESENT:

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National Capital Planning Commission

DREW BECHER
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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. HINKLE: I want to go thank everybody for being here this morning. I know we had a couple of changes in dates and I hope that didn't confuse people. But I appreciate you coming out on this Friday morning and hearing what we have to say about this project.

We're a little bit excited about this. I think it's a good chance to actually improve the lives of residents in the District, as well as the visitors, as well as improve the image of the national capital. So we're kind of psyched about getting this going.

I'm Jeff Hinkle. I work here at NCPC. I'm a planner here. I am the project manager to CapitalSpace. In the future all contact will be through me.

I just wanted to go over the agenda. It's relatively short. We have Drew Becher here. He's the deputy director at the District's Office of Planning and he'll do kind of a quick overview of what this project is. I'll kind of walk through the steps of the scope of work and then we'll open it up for questions.

I hope all of you have received a copy of the agenda. At the bottom we talk about how we'll post the questions today, as well as if you have additional questions that you want to submit in writing. If you get those to us by the end of Monday, we will post those, as

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well as some answers, I believe Thursday, next Thursday. Then we will be providing a transcript of this meeting if you'd like, and that should be available next week, as well.

So with that, I'm going to invite Drew up here to talk a little bit about the project and then we'll move on from there for the discussion on the scope of work.

MR. BECHER: Thanks, Jeff.

Good morning, everyone. I'm going to do this really quickly and I'm really not going to do it based on the actual project itself but really on how this project came about.

When I first started here I was in the Department of Parks and Recreation and we were looking at our map and the District, what it actually owns is about 1,300 to 1,400 acres and the rest is national parkland. However, when we were out in the community talking to people, people did not really see a dark green blotch and a light green blotch on a map. They see green and it was a park or open space and they didn't really care if the District maintained it or mowed it or programmed it, or if the National Park Service or the Department of General Services or you name it owns it or whatever. They just know that they use it and the tourists use it and it should be maintained and programmed in a certain way.

So the idea came about actually that we needed a look at the green space in the capital region or in the capital itself, in the District of Columbia, as one. We did this actually--in my past life I was in Chicago, along with a couple of other people here, and we did a plan called City Space in Chicago. It was looking at green space in Chicago. Boston has one. Seattle's done one. Portland's done one. Actually even Atlanta's done one.

The idea was we need to look holistically at our land and there's something else happening in the District here that is very interesting is our real estate market. What's happening with the real estate market here is probably the biggest impetus for this project, which is we need a goal for open space per resident for the District, which we don't currently have.

Yes, we are one of the greenest cities. When you do the numbers we have something like 7,800 acres of green space. However, most of that green space is held in Rock Creek and then also in Southeast and we have a large wedge of the city called Northeast and actually the east portion of Northwest that actually if you look on the map does not have very much green space.

And if you overlay the development and the building permits onto those maps, voila, the Northeast and the east side of Northwest is where all of the development

is happening. And what we're seeing is the District, at times, these parks in that area were like oh, we should give them up for development and it comes in that yeah, we should probably give it up for development; it should be a housing site, that type of thing.

But then when the community starts becoming real again they're looking for open space. And what we did was we were giving open space for housing and the neighborhood is now a neighborhood again with people living there, and then there's no open space.

So we're finding ourselves in a dense city like this, we can't just make open space happen. So the idea is let's have a plan for open space and future open space in the city, or in the District. And for people from out of town here, it's really weird. We're not a city and we're not a state; we're a district. That's an interesting type thing that happens here. There is no state, there's no county, there is no city; it's a district and we do all types of open space. So we're sort of the state, the national, and the local park district, per se.

So that's one of the big things we want out of this plan. We want a goal for open space for the District. And then we want to be able to rank our neighborhoods in order of deficit open space and know where we should--where the District and its capital dollars should be targeted.

So what's our top 10 deficit neighborhoods in green space? We should be purchasing property there, that type of thing.

Another thing that we are looking at as a District is--and I don't really particularly like this word but everyone will know what it means, but we want to come up with another type thing--is an open space impact fee, something like that to actually purchase property ahead of the development boom, land-bank it for future open space needs, that type of thing. We want to get ahead of the development versus always trying to play catch-up and spending a lot of money on open space that we could probably get--we could have gotten years ago for a lot less.

So those are some of the major things that we wanted out of it, but I think probably one of the coolest thing that's happened throughout this process is this is going to be one of the first times that the NCPC, the District, the federal government, we're all working together for this. That should be really said here. This is a partnership between the District of Columbia government and the federal government to look at the District as a whole. And it's something that there always seems to be this sort of give-and-take between the federal and the local here and this is one of the first projects that we're going to really try to launch as one. We're

going to speak as one and hopefully the community can come along with us as one.

And everyone in this room, no matter what is the outcome, we would like to have everybody involved in this project and I think this could be a model for how other communities--as I said before, other communities have done this, but I don't think they've done this in such a way of having partners and the overlay of the federal government like we do and it could be a really interesting program to look at nationally.

So with that, I'd like to turn it back over to Jeff to go through a little bit more detail of what we're talking about. I thank you for the great turn-out. Thank you for being here this morning. We're looking forward to everyone's proposals. This is going to be an amazing project and the District is--this is one of the high priorities for the District government, as I know it is for NCPC and the National Park Service. Thanks.

MR. HINKLE: Thank you, Drew.

Can everybody see?

Now as Drew mentioned, this is a partnership and I think it's an incredible partnership with a lot of people coming to the table to talk about parks and open space. For the purposes of this contract, however, NCPC will be the lead and we will be the main contact.

So what is it? Drew spoke a little bit about what this project is. It's actually a comprehensive plan for parks and open space within Washington, D.C. and it's both properties that are owned and managed by the District of Columbia, as well as the National Park Service.

And what we plan to accomplish is to develop a shared vision and planning framework which will allow each individual agency to implement their own actions but in a comprehensive manner and very cohesively. So we expect the result of this to be a coordinated and seamless system of parks and open space that meets both federal and local needs.

As Drew mentioned, there's already an abundance and a variety of parks and open space within the District and with CapitalSpace, we hope to take a comprehensive look at what we have, what are needs are, and actually develop solutions to meet those needs.

The key challenges that we've identified so far is ensuring that the quality of the parks and open spaces are adequate, and one of our primary goals is to ensure that we have one of the best park systems in the country and something that could be a model for the rest of the country, as well.

We also want to ensure that the connections and access to our parks and open space system are adequate and

that the systems are connected, and this includes having the right types of parks and open spaces in the right places, as well as ensuring that things such as ecological corridors and trails are connected.

And with the unique position of D.C. as both a national capital and a thriving city itself, we want to ensure that the parks and open space system meets both the needs of the visitors to the national capital, as well as the residents.

So results of the CapitalSpace planning process will identify the current and future needs and opportunities for parks and open space within the District, and we want to identify the resources to meet those needs and opportunities. We also want to identify and clarify federal and local needs for parks and open space and make recommendations to improve upon the current relationship between the federal establishment and the local government on developing and managing and maintaining these parks within the District.

And CapitalSpace will make recommendations to improve the quality, access, as well as the use of parks.

So we've designed CapitalSpace to follow a typical planning process and are developing a vision and setting goals and opportunities, completing some background research and analysis of data, developing the plan with

recommendations, implementing those recommendations, and engaging the public throughout the entire process.

In establishing a vision, our goals are that we begin to develop a seamless system of parks and open space, which is where--we want to make it, as Drew mentioned, make it unclear where federal lands end and local lands begin and we want to ensure that various connections are complete.

We also want to develop a system that is superior in quality and that can be a model to be followed across the country. We also want to ensure that parks and open space systems meet the needs of all the users.

But we don't want to recreate the wheel with CapitalSpace. There's already been a tremendous amount of park planning within the District for at least 100 years. One of the initial steps we hope to take is to understand what the goals of those plans are, and that includes the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative, what the National Park Service's management plans state, and then we want to work through those goals and include them in our planning effort.

I included a photograph of the McMillan Plan here. That was a plan from 1901 that recommended the connection of the Fort Circle Park system. That's just one

of the things we want to look at and see how to accomplish within the CapitalSpace program.

As we see it, the development of the vision is an iterative process and that is that we'll be developing the vision over time by asking questions and having discussions with various stakeholders.

And as we develop this vision we want to start identifying the condition of the parks and open space parcels within the District, so I put a picture of Franklin Square up here but really what we want to answer are how did we get this park? Is it historic? And these are questions we want to apply to all parks across the District. If it's historic, what purpose was it meant to serve? What's it like today? Is it part of the historic system? Is it on a green boulevard or important street? Is it part of an ecological corridor? Who owns and manages these spaces? How big is it? What's on it?

And once we do that kind of background analysis, we want to take a look at all the parks within the city. So how would we identify Franklin Park when it's compared to other parks throughout the city? Do we have enough of these types of parks? We want to know who uses it today, who's going to be using it tomorrow.

What's good about the parks? Do we have enough like Franklin Park itself? Or what do we need to improve it?

So we'll get those answers through an analysis of data, through interviews, developing typologies and standards specific to D.C., and assessing our current assets.

All this will be folded into what we're calling current a State of the District Parks and Open Space Report, and this will be a summary of all this research that's gone on previously. So it's a summary of the background and current conditions. It's a summary of the assets and needs assessments. And this will kind of guide us to an initial vision that includes goals and objectives.

The next step would be actually producing the plan. We've developed, just for an organization method, we developed these five themes of parks and open spaces within the District. These are places to connect, places to preserve, places to green, places to play, and places to grow, and I'll walk through each of those with you in a second.

And what we envision is that for each theme we'll have some design concepts, we'll have some various programs and some various policies to meet what our recommendations

are. And these will all be focussed on land and physical resources, for the most part.

The places to connect essentially focusses on those areas where transportation, recreational and ecological connections need to be completed or improved. So it might be improving a boulevard that connects some important historical parks. As I mentioned before, it might be connecting the Fort Circle Park system or just adding a bridge or something to get from one place to another.

Places to preserve focusses on maintaining and restoring those existing treasures that we do have in the District, as well as finding ways to enliven them. So that includes finding ways to have federal commemorative spaces, also accommodate local recreational needs. And we put up a picture of Dupont Circle because that's a prime example of a commemorative space that actually serves the neighborhood well. And different neighborhoods may have different recreational needs but Dupont Circle is people-watching. It's a prime example of what could occur in many of these special places that we do have existing.

Places to green is all about improving existing infrastructure, so that includes recreational facilities but it also could be looking at how parks are connected and making improvements to these connections. So here's an

example of K Street, which connects a number of parks--you know, what it looked like historically, as well as what we hope it'll look like relatively soon, which would be a green boulevard.

Places to green also means finding unique solutions to various problems and we included this example of Watts Park, where some concrete barriers were used to create a gateway into the park itself.

Places to play is simply ensuring that the right types of desired recreational facilities are in the right places and are accessible. We have some tremendous assets right now. We just want to make sure that those assets match what the neighborhoods and the visitors require.

And then places to grow is also--as Drew mentioned, there are some locations in the District where there might be a lack of parks and open space, so it's really looking at how to create new parks and neighborhoods that are missing the space that they need and ensuring that new development has adequate open space. And this might even be including looking at new methods to finding open space, like putting green infrastructure up on rooftops.

And what we see as a final product of the plan is the vision, and then for each theme, as I mentioned, some programs, policies, design concepts. Then we'll also

identify what the priorities are for future local and federal investments.

In implementation, what we expect is there will be a lot of interviews conducted and identifying case studies to recommend improvements to working relationships and partnerships. We want to identify some appropriate model language to develop some planning and regulatory tools.

We want to identify some opportunities for developing model projects, and these will be projects that could illustrate prime examples of improvements to parks and open spaces. We want to identify opportunities for advancing land acquisitions or transfers or even dispositions of existing open space that we own and don't necessarily need because it's not serving the right purposes.

We actually want to develop some cost estimates for some standard recommended capital improvements that might come out of the plan. And we also want to identify some potential funding sources and strategies. And then this will be included in the report on phasing and priorities, which we're currently calling the action agenda.

And throughout this process we'll certainly include the public. So what we're doing now is the four

partners have kind of identified who the stakeholders are. Then we want to also utilize an existing processes so that the District currently has a Comprehensive Plan occurring, the revision occurring, and the Department of Parks and Rec, they're developing their master plan. So that includes some surveys and public meetings, so we want to get the feedback out of those processes and include it in this planning process.

We see that there might be a need to use stakeholder groups to discuss some site or specific issues. And then we also have some public outreach events planned.

Coming up in December, and I'll speak to this shortly, we have a Green Infrastructure and Open Space Symposium planned. We also will present to the public in what we see as a major event the State of the District's Parks and Open Spaces Report, which is that summary report I mentioned. And then, in the end, we'll certainly have a large public process when the plan's developed and we'll be presenting the draft and the final report.

So what's next? As you all probably know, proposals are due on Thursday, November 3 and we hope to have a contract signed in mid-November. The State of the District's Parks and Open Space Report, which I mentioned, we expect to have due in the spring of 2006. We'll use another year to develop the plan. We're looking at having

a draft plan done in the spring of 2007 and the final plan completed in actually July of 2007.

So what else is happening? I mentioned some of these things are occurring right now. We have the Green Infrastructure and Open Space Symposium, which the four partners are planning in association with Casey Tree Foundation and this is to bring in some experts on green infrastructure and open space and begin a dialogue on some principles that can be applied to D.C., as well as other urban areas. So you'll probably be hearing more about that if you're involved in green infrastructure in the District.

NCPC's also starting a federal/city framework plan, which is the continuation of implementing our Legacy Plan, which came out in 1997, which is a planning framework for improvements in the monumental core. This plan will look at such things as opportunities to restore L'Enfant streets and a number of other issues, but it'll also look at strengthening connections of open space within the core and looking for connections between new open spaces, such as are proposed for South Capitol Street.

Then, as I mentioned, the D.C. Office of Planning is currently revising their Comprehensive Plan and the D.C. Department of Parks and Rec is working on a recreational facilities master plan.

So that concludes my presentation and we'll open up for questions, not only myself, but there's a couple of other people here who are open to answering questions.

Now we are recording this, so we do ask you that you use a microphone and we'll have somebody walking around with a mic.

So with that, I'll open it up for questions and we'll try to get you some decent responses here.

MR. HARNIK: Peter Harnik from Trust for Public Land.

What is the role of the Mall? What do you see the Mall, the role of the Mall in this study? It seems like maybe you're excluding the Mall from the study or partially excluding it. Can you explain that?

MR. HINKLE: Sure. The Mall's going to be addressed in a National Park Service management plan, as well as our federal/city monumental core plan, which I mentioned. How we see it in this process is really we see this looking at the parks in the neighborhoods, as well as getting into downtown. But it excludes the Mall in the final planning effort, but we do include the Mall in the analysis and how much property is in there--you know, what role it plays in ecology issues.

But in the final plan, we will be excluding the Mall itself as far as this planning effort goes. This is

really more of a neighborhood park plan versus the National Mall plan.

MR. HARNIK: Because with the tremendous amount of sports playing on the Mall, I think that has a big impact on the neighborhood--the way neighborhoods use sports, too. So it can't be just ecology but there's a tremendous amount of game playing and--

MR. HINKLE: Oh, you're correct.

MR. HARNIK: It has impacts for the whole city.

MR. HINKLE: That'll be part of the analysis, what recreational facilities are there, how it's used, and what could be missing that could be accommodated elsewhere, what actually could be accommodated on the Mall. That will be part of this analysis.

MR. HARNIK: Thank you.

MS. DEITZ: Harriet Deitz with the Land Design.

I have a question about ownership of the plan. I know you said the four agencies are working together through this process but at the end of the day when the plan is completed, is that still to be determined, as far as getting to the implementation piece? Or will NCPC own the plan and the four agencies cooperate and implement, as appropriate?

MR. HINKLE: I would imagine that as appropriate, each agency will adopt the plan as they see fit. Through

implementation, what we envision is a number of recommendations, a number of strategies to implement those recommendations but those strategies would be picked up by each individual agency itself.

So it's a plan that we see as owned by all four agencies and will involve all four agencies, as well as others in the implementation of it.

Does that answer your question?

MS. DEITZ: Yes, it does. And one other quick question. I know obviously the scope talks about looking at park space within the District of Columbia but some of those green fingers, they don't stop at the jurisdictional border. Might there be an option to suggest within the scope looking at a system space and perhaps looking at something that continues beyond the boundary and some type of interjurisdictional cooperation to some of those resources that do, like I say, extend beyond the District's boundaries?

MR. HINKLE: Sure. I think in our analysis we have to recognize that park spaces doesn't end at the boundary and that users come in and out, you know, pass that boundary, as well. So we absolutely have to incorporate that knowledge into what we're looking at. And certainly at some point in time we'll have to have a

discussion with those jurisdictions outside to recognize what's going on between borders.

What we envision is this might be a first step to actually looking at parks and open space regionally, so that may be a number of years off but this could be the first step to actually take that analysis further out.

MS. DEITZ: I spent several years at a regional planning agency, so sometimes that--all right, thank you very much.

MR. HINKLE: Sure.

MR. RHODESIDE: Elliott Rhodeside from Rhodeside and Harwell.

Jeff, could you talk a little bit more about the needs assessment and the work that DCDPR has done and whether the basis for the needs assessment will come from that needs assessment? Or is it to be a completely newly developed needs assessment?

MR. HINKLE: No, we're going to use all the existing plans and processes that are out there. What we're trying to do is kind of collect everything and bring it together and then take a look at what's missing.

So certainly what's coming out of the Department of Parks and Rec and their master plan, including their recommendations, are going to feed into this plan, as well as the policies that'll be developed within the

Comprehensive Plan revision that DCOP is working on right now.

In terms of the needs assessment, one of the first steps, and we're currently working on right now, is actually getting all the data together from the National Park Service and the District and putting that into one database. So the next step will actually be incorporating what comes out of the master plan process of DPR into that database, as well, and then we'll take a look at what we might need in the future.

MR. RHODESIDE: Is any of that material available now to take a look at?

MR. HINKLE: That I'm not sure. I might toss that to Leslie, who's managing that program.

MS. SCHILL: Leslie Schill, Parks and Recreation.

To date we've completed a mailed survey, so we have a 10 percent response rate for 4,000 surveys mailed around the city, 800 to each ward. That data right now is in analysis. We also have early drafts for our program review, our properties analysis. The demographics are pretty much complete, so that includes projections five years out. We've also partnered with the Housing Task Force and the D.C. Comprehensive Plan, so everybody's coming with the same numbers.

Those are all ready to be shared in the next I'd say two months. We are preparing to go out for our final public meetings in mid-November and that'll be the last of the data collection for our plan.

So that public information will probably take a little longer to digest and analyze, so probably by end of December, first of the year we'll be able to share all the public information, but the early pieces that are already complete we're ready to share. We expect early draft reports for each of the pieces of the project to be complete in December.

So if this is going to be contracted mid-November, we'll start sharing everything that's ready now and we anticipate that we're going to have a draft of the plan in February, final plan late April.

MR. EDWARDS: Don Edwards, Justice and Sustainability Associates.

What level of profile publicly do you envision? Outreach is one level. High public participation involvement is something else.

MR. HINKLE: Until the initial analysis is done we envision a relatively low profile as far as public discussions. There will be interviews with stakeholders that we could imagine or specific groups who have specific issues, but until we finalize and release what we're

calling the State of the District Parks and Open Space Report, we don't envision that much public participation at this point, simply because we're getting a lot of information and a lot of comments from the processes that are currently occurring.

Post that point that that report comes out, we expect a lot of public participation in finalizing a vision and developing goals and objectives and actually doing the plan itself. Within the scope of work we haven't identified a lot of what we expect but that's kind of one of the reasons why we put out this RFP, is to actually see what kind of proposals come in in terms of public participation.

MR. EDWARDS: Thank you.

MR. HINKLE: Are there other questions?

MR. HARNIK: On the implementation aspect, do you expect budgetary--do you expect estimates of cost and a budget? Is this plan going to have a budget associated with it?

MR. HINKLE: In terms of implementation, what we're hoping is at least through this contract, to have some initial frameworks for how to approach implementation. So that would be finding some model language to develop, you know, a landscape ordinance or that sort of thing. But we don't expect a landscape ordinance to be written at this

point within this contract. It would be finding examples of best practices in park maintenance, but it's not necessarily developing the plan to do that here.

So that's as far as implementation goes within this contract. And the next step would be looking at the recommendations in the plan and actually seeing what those recommended implementation steps are and then going from there within each agency and figuring out the best steps to take.

Does that answer your question?

MR. HARNIK: Yes.

MS. BLAHA: I'm Kathy Blaha from Trust for Public Land.

So then when you refer to model projects in there, you're not talking about completing the model projects. You're talking about identifying them?

MR. HINKLE: That's correct. What those model projects could be, you know, who might be the appropriate place to have that managed, what the expected outcome might be, but not necessarily doing the model project itself.

MS. KOSTER: Julia Koster with NCPC.

If I could add, I think we are looking for what I'd call ballpark budget numbers to help us understand how we can prioritize resources both federally and locally. So we're not asking for detailed model project cost estimates

but we would be trying to understand again ballpark estimates for what it would cost to implement various programs, policies and projects. Big picture numbers.

MR. WOLFF: Ted Wolff, Wolff Clements and Associates.

Do you have or will you have at the time the consultant team gets started a GIS or similar database that would identify both population by census or something and also the District's supply of open space so we could do that quantitative analysis of deficit that Drew was talking about? That seems to be key to having that in place for the consultant team. Otherwise, we could spend ages--

MR. HINKLE: That's correct. One of our thoughts is that we didn't want this budget eaten up by the consultants doing that type of data collection. So we are developing a GIS database of parks and open space sites within the District currently and that's relatively complete right now and that will be delivered at the start of the contract, as well as we're working with the District to attain other demographic data that will be given up front to the project.

MR. RHODESIDE: Is any of that data available to look at before November 3 so we could see the breadth of the data, the kinds of data, all the things that you've

amassed so we could get a better idea of what you have and what may be needed?

MR. HINKLE: Sure. Let me try to respond to that at a later date in our write-up next week and I'll actually check with our partners and see what we could get out now, versus next month, and get back with you on that.

MR. RHODESIDE: It was unclear whether you're going to be having interviews after November 3 or you're just going to be selecting based on the RFP responses.

MR. HINKLE: We'll just be selecting based on the RFP responses.

Any other questions?

All right. Well, I want to thank you for coming out. As I said, we're excited about this project.

If you do have some questions, please submit them to us in writing before the end of next Monday and we'll actually get those questions and answers out next week. Also, any further questions after that.

I wanted to introduce--this is our contracting officer, Angela Roach, who has helped put the materials together this morning. Her contact information, I believe, is on our website. In addition, you could also send questions to CapitalSpace at NCPC.gov and that will get to Angela.

But we do request that any other contact in terms of questions to this RFP be made to Angela versus anyone else on the team at this point.

We appreciate you coming out and look forward to your proposals. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 10:48 a.m., the meeting was adjourned.]